

Security Bars – on Windows And Doors

This handout details the requirements for quick release mechanisms installed in conjunction with bars, grills, grates, security roll down shutters or similar devices that are placed over residential emergency escape windows or doors. These requirements apply to any security device installed over emergency escape windows, doors, or window wells regardless of when installed.

A building permit is required for the new installation of any security bar device as well as for the retrofit installation of any quick release mechanism installed over the required bedroom egress opening.

Uniform Building Code Section 310.4 specifies that every basement and sleeping room below the fourth floor shall have at least one operable window or exterior door approved for emergency escape. These emergency escape windows or doors must provide a full clear opening and shall be operable from the inside without the use of separate tools or special knowledge.

Bars, grills, grates, or similar devices may be installed on emergency escape or rescue windows, doors, or window wells provided:

1. The devices are equipped with approved release mechanisms that are operable from the inside without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort; and
2. The building is equipped with smoke detectors installed per UBC Section 310.9, including within each sleeping room, corridor or area adjacent to each separate sleeping area, on each story and in the basement (where applicable).

Requirements for Quick Release Mechanisms

1. The quick release latch for egress windows shall be actuated by a readily accessible knob, handle or button which may be grasped by hand and operated by a single twist, turn or pull or by pedal which may be pushed by foot. The use of slide bolts, pull chain bolts and releases requiring both hands for actuation are prohibited. The quick release latch shall be unobstructed, readily visible and accessible, mounted no greater than 36 inches from the edge of the window, at a height not to exceed 48 inches above the finished floor as measured from the center of the device. The release latch shall not require more than 10 pounds of force to unlatch the security device to the fully opened position.
2. Security devices over emergency escape doors may be provided with a night latch, dead bolt or security chain, provided such devices are operable from the inside without the use of key or special tool.
3. A licensed contractor, building owner or his representative shall properly install each quick release system (per manufacturer instructions).
4. Each system shall be installed in conjunction with smoke detectors, installed as per Section 310.9 of the UBC.
5. Each system must be field tested for proper operation and witnessed by the Building Inspector prior to acceptance.
6. The installed bars, grills or grates must not restrict the available light or ventilation through the required windows by more than 15%. When open, the bars must not diminish the required minimum clear openable area of the egress window or exit door.
7. The release mechanism must be manufactured from corrosive resistant materials.

8. The manufacturer must provide maintenance instructions to the building owner to ensure proper long-term functionality.
9. Installers will be required to test each release mechanism and complete the attached certificate to verify that the installation fully complies with this Policy.

Permit Process

1. The applicant must stipulate on the permit application that the installed bars will comply with the attached Building Division Policy requirements.
2. A Building permit will be required for bars, grills or grates installed over any required bedroom escape window(s) and exit door(s).
3. A minimum permit fee will be charged for single-family houses.
4. For multi-unit buildings, the standard procedure of utilizing the valuation of the work and the number of units impacted will be used to assess the permit fees.
5. When window bar abatement projects are funded by the City Housing Department to replace fixed bars with complying security bars, the construction related taxes will not be assessed. (Per the City of San Jose Municipal Code Section 4.46.30.D).
6. Building permits will be issued over the counter with no plan or elevation being required.

Inspection Process

1. A final inspection will be the only inspection required. The proper location of each release mechanism will be verified and operation of all release mechanism(s) will be field-tested.
2. The contractor or owner of the property will be responsible to reset each released mechanism and to close the window grill.
3. A certificate of proper installation (provided below) must be completed for each dwelling unit by the installer prior to final inspection. During final inspection the certificate shall be made available to the inspector for their review. The certificate will be returned to the owner or tenant for their records.
4. Verification of proper installation of smoke detectors as per UBC 310.9 will be made.

CERTIFICATE OF PROPER INSTALLATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> All release mechanisms have been tested and verified to ensure that the installation is in compliance with the attached Building Division Policy requirements.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Occupants have been instructed on proper activation of release mechanism.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Owner has been instructed on proper maintenance of release mechanism.	
Address:	
Installation Company:	Phone No:
Installers Name: (print)	
Installers Signature:	
Date:	

Additional information can be obtained by visiting our website at www.sanjoseca.gov/building/ or by calling our Information Inspector's voice mail at (408) 535-3555 and leaving a detailed message. In addition you may visit the Building Division in City Hall at 200 East Santa Clara Street. Our hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with limited service between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.